



Trip Report

Senator Sam Brownback & Representative Frank Wolf

Darfur, Western Sudan

June 27 - 29, 2004

It was just 10 years ago – in 1994 – when the world stood by and watched as more than 800,000 ethnic Tutsis were systematically murdered in Rwanda by rival extremist Hutus.

When the killing finally ended after 100 days – and the horrific images of what had taken place were broadcast around the globe – world leaders acknowledged it was genocide, apologized for failing to intervene, and vowed “never again.”

That pledge from the international community is being put to the test today in western Sudan, where an estimated 30,000 black African Muslims have been murdered and more than 1 million have been driven from their tribal lands and forced to live in one of 129 refugee camps scattered across the western provinces of Darfur. More than 160,000 have fled across the border to Chad.

The United Nations Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide describes genocide as acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, national, ethnic, racial or religious groups, as such:

- Killing members of the group;
- Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group;
- Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about physical destruction in whole or in part;
- Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group;
- Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.

After just returning from spending three days and two nights (June 27-29) in Darfur, we believe what is happening there may very well meet this test.

During our trip we visited five refugee camps: Abu Shouk; Tawilah; Krinding; Sisi and Morney – all sprawling tent cities jam-packed with thousands of displaced families and fast becoming breeding grounds for disease and sickness.

We drove past dozens of pillaged villages and walked through what was left of four burned to the ground.

We heard countless stories about rape, murder and plunder.

We even watched the barbarous men – Arab militiamen called Janjaweed – who are carrying out these attacks sitting astride camels and horses just a short distance from where young and old have sought what they had hoped would be a safe harbor.

Janjaweed is roughly translated in Arabic as “wild men on horses with G-3 guns.” Ruthless, brutal killers, the Janjaweed have instigated a reign of terror on Darfur – a region about the size of Texas – for more than a year. They kill men. They rape women. They abduct children. They torch villages. They dump human corpses and animal carcasses in wells to contaminate the water. Their mandate is essentially doing whatever necessary to force the black African Muslims from their land to never return.

It is clearly the intent of Janjaweed to purge the region of darker-skinned African

Muslims, in particular members of the Fur, Zaghawa, and Massaleit tribes.

From where does this mandate come? The Government of Sudan disavows supporting the Janjaweed. Some officials in Khartoum even deny the existence of a humanitarian crisis in the region. Yet the facts prove otherwise. We witnessed the destruction. We heard horrific accounts of violence and intimidation. We talked to rape victims. We saw the scars on men who had been shot. We watched mothers cradle their sick and dying babies, hoping against all odds that their children would survive. We saw armed Janjaweed waiting to prey on innocent victims along the perimeter of refugee camps.

To hear the vivid, heartrending descriptions of the attacks it is clear the Janjaweed have the support – and the approval – of the Government of Sudan to operate with impunity. The same stories were repeated at every camp we visited. The raids would happen early in the morning. First comes the low rumble of a Soviet-made Antonov plane – flown by Sudanese pilots – to bomb the village. Next come helicopter gunships – again, flown by Sudanese pilots – to strafe the village with the huge machine guns mounted on each side. Sometimes the helicopters would land and unload supplies for the Janjaweed. They would then be reloaded with booty confiscated from a village. One man told us he saw cows being loaded onto one helicopter. Moments later, the Janjaweed, some clad in military uniforms, would come galloping in on horseback and camels to finish the job by killing, raping, stealing and plundering.

Walking through the burned out villages we could tell the people living there had little or no time to react. They left everything they owned – lanterns, cookware, water jugs, pottery, plows – and ran for their lives. There was no time to stop and bury their dead.

The Janjaweed made certain that there would be nothing left for the villagers to come home to. Huts were torched. Donkeys, goats and cows were stolen, slaughtered or dumped into wells to poison the water. Grain containers destroyed. In one village we saw where the Janjaweed even burned the mosque.

Only the lucky ones – mostly women and children – made it out alive.

ETHNIC CLEANSING

What is happening in Darfur is rooted in ethnic cleansing. Religion has nothing to do with what unfolded over the last year.

No black African is safe in Darfur. Security is non-existent. The Janjaweed are everywhere. Outside the camps. Inside the camps. They walk freely through the marketplace in Geneina, a town in far western Darfur, with guns slung over their shoulders. One shopkeeper, we were told, was shot in the head by a Janjaweed because he wasn't willing to lower the price of a watermelon.

The Government of Sudan military and security forces also are omnipresent. At each of the places we visited we were either trailed or escorted by a mixture of military regulars, police forces and government "minders." There have been reports that the government has been folding the Janjaweed into its regular forces as a way to disguise and protect them. At two of the camps we visited, we were told the government had inserted spies to report on what was said or to threaten those who talked. We were told the "minders" repeatedly scolded refugees and told them in Arabic to shut up. Yet, even with these restrictions, refugees in every camp

we visited were eager to tell their stories.

It should be understood that the Janjaweed are not “taking” the land from the black Muslim farmers they are terrorizing. The Janjaweed, whose historical roots are part of the region’s roving nomads who have battled with the African farmers for generations, are employing a government-supported scorched earth policy to drive them out of the region – and perhaps to extinction. It also was clear that only villages inhabited by black African Muslims were being targeted. Arab villages sitting just next to African ones miles from the nearest towns have been left unscathed.

On our first day in the region, we met with local Government of Sudan officials in the town of El Fasher, a two-hour plane ride west of Khartoum. They blame the crisis in the region on two black African rebel groups – the Sudan Liberation Army (SLA) and the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) – who started an uprising in February 2003 over what they regarded as unjust treatment by the government in their struggle over land and resources with Arab countrymen. The rebel forces actually held El Fasher for a short period last year. A cease-fire was agreed to in April 2004 between the rebel groups and the Government of Sudan, but the Janjaweed have continued to carry out attacks with the support and approval of Khartoum.

While local government officials in El Fasher were adamant in saying there is no connection between the Government of Sudan and the Janjaweed, whom they called “armed bandits,” the militiamen we saw did not look like skilled pilots who could fly planes or helicopters.

We also were told the Janjaweed are well armed and well supplied. If they are traditional nomads, how are they getting modern automatic weapons, and, more importantly, from whom? They also are said to have satellite phones, an astonishing fact considering most the people in the far western provinces of Darfur have probably never even seen or walked on a paved road.

The impunity under which the Janjaweed operate was most telling as we approached the airport in Geneina on our last day in the region for our flight back to Khartoum. In plain sight was an encampment of Janjaweed within shouting distance of a contingent of Government of Sudan regulars. No more than 200 yards separated the two groups. Sitting on the tarmac were two helicopter gunships and a Russian-made Antonov plane.

WORLD’S WORST HUMANITARIAN CRISIS

The situation in Darfur is being described as the worst humanitarian crisis in the world today. We agree. But sadly, and with a great sense of urgency, things are only going to worsen. Some say that even under the best of circumstances, as many as 300,000 Darfuris forced from their homes are expected to die from malnutrition and diarrhea or diseases such as malaria and cholera in the coming months. Measles have already spread through Abu Shouck, a large refugee camp outside of El Fasher.

According to some predictions, the death toll could reach as high as 1 million by next year. The Dafuri farmers have missed another planting season and will now be dependent on grain and other food stuffs provided by the international community for at least another year. The impending rainy season presents its own set of problems, making roads impassable for food deliveries and the likelihood of disease increasing dramatically with the heavy rains.

The potential for a crisis of catastrophic proportions is very real, especially since none of the villagers we talked to at the refugee camps believed they will be able to go back to their homes anytime soon. Having been brutally terrorized by the Janjaweed and fearing for their lives, they do not believe Government of Sudan officials who say it is safe to return to their villages. We heard stories of some families who went back to their villages only to return to the camps a week later for fear of being attacked again.

The attacks have traumatized thousands of young children. In an effort to cope with what they have endured, programs have been established in the camps to help the young boys and girls deal with their psychological scars. Part of the program encourages them to draw pictures of what they have seen. The crayon drawings are chilling. Huts on fire, red flames shooting through the roof. Planes and helicopters flying overhead shooting bullets. Dead bodies, depictions, perhaps, of their mother or father.

We also saw a group of children who had made clay figures of men on camels and horseback attacking villages. There is no way to measure the impact of these atrocities on the thousands of children living in these camps. Their lives are forever scarred.

The first step in resolving this crisis is disarming the Janjaweed. It must be done swiftly and universally. If not, the Janjaweed will just bury their weapons in the sand, wait for the pressure from the international community to lift, then reinitiate their reign of terror.

A system of justice overseen by outside monitors must also be implemented. The heinous, murderous acts carried out by the Janjaweed cannot go unpunished. War crimes and crimes against humanity clearly have been – and continue to be – committed. Those responsible must be brought to justice.

DIFFICULT LIFE IN IDP CAMPS

Abu Shouk was the first of five IDP (Internally Displaced People) camps we visited. More than 40,000 people live in this sprawling tent city, created in April after El Fasher was overrun with displaced families. Methodically laid out with water stations, a health clinic, a supplemental feeding station and crude latrines, it is being hailed as a “model” by humanitarian relief workers in the region.

However, aid workers at Abu Shouk are deeply concerned. They observe that the malnutrition rate at this “model” camp is a staggering eight to nine deaths every day, and fear what is happening at the other camps, especially in the more remote areas of Darfur that have not been reached by humanitarian groups.

Life in the camps is difficult. Crude shelters made from straw and sticks and covered with plastic sheeting stretch as far as the eye can see. Families arriving at the camps – almost all after walking for days in the hot sun from their now abandoned villages – are only given a tarp, a water jug, cookware and a small amount of grain.

The sanitary conditions are wretched. The sandy conditions make building latrines difficult. At Mornay, the largest of the IDP camps in Darfur with more than 70,000 inhabitants, it was hard not to step in either human or animal feces as we walked. In a few weeks, when the heavy rains begin, excrement will flow across the entire camp. Mortality from diarrhea, which we were told represents one-third of the deaths in the camps, will only increase.

To their credit, all the non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that have been allowed to operate in Darfur have done – and continue to do – a tremendous job under extremely trying circumstances. The Government of Sudan has repeatedly thrown up roadblocks to bringing in aid. It has denied or slowed visa processing for relief workers. It has kept aid vehicles locked up in customs for weeks at a time. It has blocked relief groups from bringing in radios. It has limited access to certain regions of the country. All this has made getting medicine, food and other humanitarian supplies like plastic sheeting and water jugs an uphill battle. While the Government of Sudan plays its games, people are dying as needed aid sits on tarmacs.

As we approached the Morney camp on the last day of our three-day trip, we were stopped by Government of Sudan soldiers and security officers. They followed us throughout the camp, watching with whom we talked. Amazingly, their presence did not inhibit the refugees from recanting the horrors from which they escaped – and for some, mostly women, continue to endure.

The men said while they feel somewhat secure inside the confines of the camps, they dare not venture outside for fear of being shot or killed by the Janjaweed. They showed us scars on their arms and legs of the gunshot wounds they received while escaping from their villages. They are despondent over the fact that they are unable to provide food for their families because they cannot farm their fields. They expressed utter sadness and outrage about their wives and daughters who venture outside the borders of the camp to collect firewood and straw, knowing the fate that awaits them at the hands of the Janjaweed. Life and death decisions are made every day: send the men out and risk death or send the women out and risk rape.

Rape is clearly another weapon being used by the Janjaweed. Rapes, we were told, happen almost daily to the women who venture outside the confines of the camps in search of firewood and straw. They leave very early in the morning, hoping to evade their tormentors before they awake. With the camps swelling in size and nearby resources dwindling, they often walk several miles. The farther the women go from the camp, the greater the risk of being attacked by the Janjaweed. As we approached Mornay, we saw a number of Janjaweed resting with their camels and horses along the perimeter of the camp, easily within walking distance.

We heard the horrific story of four young girls – two of whom were sisters – who had been raped just days before we arrived. They had left the camp to collect straw to feed the family's donkey when they were attacked. They said their attackers told them they were slaves and that their skin was too dark. As they were being raped, they said the Janjaweed told them they were hoping to make more lighter-skinned babies.

One of the four women assaulted, too shy to tell her story in front of men, privately told a female journalist traveling with us that if anyone were to find out she had been raped, she would never be able to marry.

We were told that some of the rape victims were being branded on their back and arms by the Janjaweed, permanently labeling the women. We heard the chilling account of the rape of a 9-year-old girl.

We also received a letter during our trip from a group of women who were raped. To protect them further attacks, we purposely do not mention where they are from or list their names. The translation is heartbreaking:

"Messrs Members of the U.S. Congress

"Peace and the mercy and the blessings of God be upon you.

"We thank you for your help and for standing by the weak of the world, wherever they are found. We welcome you to the the (. . .) region, which was devastated by the Janjaweed, or what is referred to as the government 'horse- and camel-men,' on Friday (. . . 2004), when they caused havoc by killing and burning and committing plunder and rape. This was carried out with the help of the government, which used the (. . .) region as an airport and supplied the Janjaweed with munitions and supplies. So we, the raped woman of the (. . .) region, would like to explain to you what has happened and God is our best witness.

"We are forty-four raped women. As a result of that savagery, some of us became pregnant, some have aborted, some took out their wombs and some are still receiving medical treatment. Hereunder, we list the names of the raped women and state that we have high hopes in you and the international community to stand by us and not to forsake us to this tyrannical, brutal and racist regime, which wants to eliminate us racially, bearing in mind that 90 percent of our sisters at (. . .) are widows."

"(Above) are the names of some of the women raped in the (. . .) region. Some of these individuals are now at (. . .), some are at Tawilah and some are at Abu Shouk camps. Everything we said is the absolute truth. These girls were raped in front of our fathers and husbands.

"We hope that you and the international community will continue to preserve the balance of the peoples and nations.

"Thank you.

From: The raped women at (. . .)."

These rape victims have nowhere to turn. Even if they report the attacks to the police, they know nothing will happen. The police, the military and the Janjaweed all appear to be acting in coordination.

DIRE SITUATION IS MAN-MADE

The situation in Darfur is dire, and from what we could see, it is entirely man-made. These people who had managed to survive even the severest droughts and famines during the course of their long history are now in mortal danger of being wiped out simply because of the darker shade of their skin color.

Over the course of three days, we saw the worst of man's inhumanity to man, but we also saw the best of what it means to be human: mothers waiting patiently for hours in the hot sun so that they could try to save their babies; NGO aid workers and volunteer doctors feeding and caring for the sick and the dying, and the courage and bravery of men, women and children eager to talk to us so that we would know their story.

The world made a promise in 1994 to never again allow the systematic destruction of a people or race. "Never again" – words said, too, after the Holocaust. In Darfur, the international community has a chance to stop history from repeating itself. It also has a chance to end this nightmare for those who have found a way to survive. If the international community fails to act, the next cycle of this crisis will begin. The destiny facing the people of Darfur will be death

from hunger or disease.

When will the death of innocent men, women and children – who want nothing more in this world than to be left alone to farm their land and provide for their families – be too much for the conscience of the international community to bear?

We sat with the victims. We heard their mind-numbing stories. We saw their tears. Now the world has seen the pictures and heard the stories. We cannot say we did not know when history judges the year 2004 in Darfur.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Government of Sudan

- The Government of Sudan should immediately implement key provisions of the April 8 cease-fire agreement, including: the cessation of attacks against civilians; disarming the Janjaweed; and removing all barriers to the admittance of international aid into Darfur. There should be a strict timetable holding the Government of Sudan accountable for implementing these provisions.
- The Government of Sudan should renew a dialogue with the Sudan Liberation Army and the Justice and Equality Movement to discuss the political, economic and social roots of the crisis.

The African Union

- Additional cease-fire observers should be deployed and violations of the cease-fire reported immediately. The current number of 270 is inadequate to monitor the activity of an area the size of Texas.

The United States

- The United States should publically identify those responsible for the atrocities occurring in Darfur, including officials and other individuals of the Government of Sudan, as well as Janjaweed militia commanders, and impose targeted sanctions that include travel bans and the freezing of assets.
- The President should instruct the U.S. Representative to the United Nations to seek an official investigation and hold accountable officials of the Government of Sudan and government-supported militia groups responsible for the atrocities in Darfur.

The United Nations

- The United Nations should pass a strong Security Council Resolution condemning the Government of Sudan. It should call for: an immediate end to the attacks; the immediate disarming of the Janjaweed; the immediate protection of civilians by beginning a review of the security of refugees in Darfur; the determination of the feasibility of sending in UN protection forces; an immediate review of bringing legal action against those responsible for the policies of ethnic cleansing,

crimes against humanity and war crimes in Darfur; and the imposition of targeted sanctions that include travel bans and the freezing of assets.

- The United Nations should immediately deploy human rights monitors to Darfur.
- The protection of civilians and access to humanitarian aid should be a primary concern; the Security Council must be prepared to establish a no fly zone if the cease-fire continues to be violated.
- The United Nations together with other organizations should continue to coordinate a relief strategy for getting aid into those regions of Darfur that have yet to receive humanitarian assistance. Alternative routes and means of delivering aid should be considered if the Government of Sudan continues to impede deliveries.
- The United Nations should take immediate steps to seek the removal of Sudan from the United Nations Commission on Human Rights.
- The United Nations should set a deadline for the Government of Sudan to comply to all obligations under the cease-fire and prepare contingency plans in the event those deadlines are not met.

We would like to thank everyone involved in organizing, coordinating and implementing our trip. Representatives from the State Department, USAID and the NGOs both in Washington and Sudan deserve special thanks. We would also like to thank Sean Woo, general counsel to Senator Brownback, and Dan Scandling, chief of staff to Rep. Wolf, for accompanying us on the trip. They played a critical role in writing this report and took all the photographs. We would also like to thank Janet Shaffron, legislative director, and Samantha Stockman, foreign affairs legislative assistant, to Rep. Wolf, and Brian Hart, communications director, and Josh Carter, legislative aide, of Senator Sam Brownback, for editing the report. Colin Samples, an intern in Rep. Wolf's office, did the design and layout.

We also want to extend out thanks to Secretary of State Colin Powell and UN Secretary General Kofi Annan for visiting the region. Their personal involvement in working to resolve this crisis is critically important.



Russian-made Antonov parked at airport in Geneina.



Helicopter gunships on tarmac at airport in Geneina.



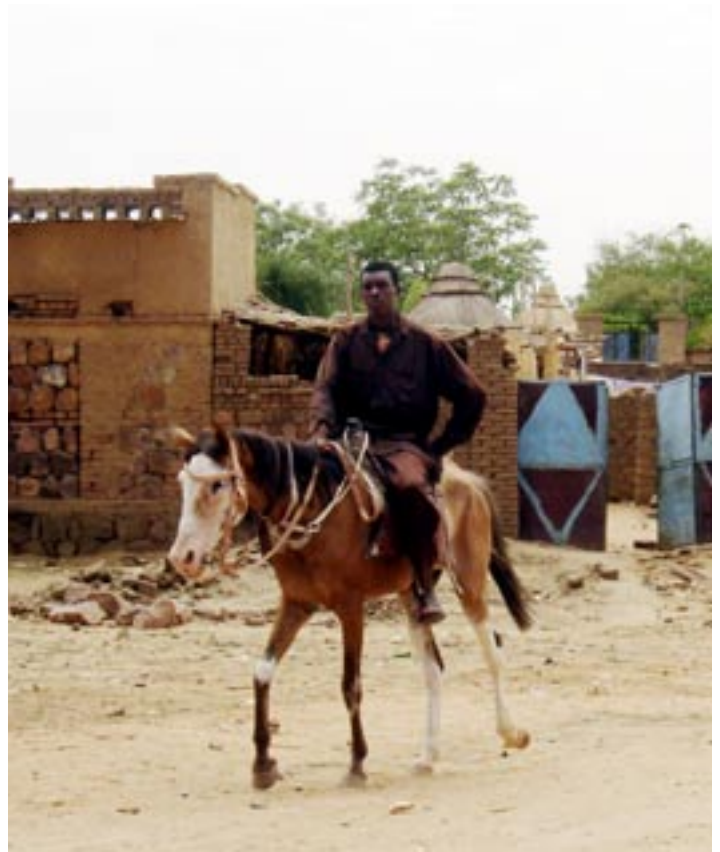
Abu Shouk IDP camp near El Fasher is considered a “model” refugee camp. More than 40,00 live here.



When families arrive, they receive plastic sheeting, a water jug and cookware.



Hundreds of villages in Darfur have been burned to the ground. Families had little or no time to flee.



The Janjaweed are omnipresent. In the marketplace in Geneina, along the road to Morney, within walking distance of the Morney IDP camp.